

*The Vanity of the Dissenters Plea for their Separation  
from the Church of England.*

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S E R M O N

Preached before the

K I N G

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W I N D S O R,

*September the 10th. 1682.*

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By *ROBERT CREYGHTON, D.D.*  
Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty.

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## I COR. I. 10.

*Now I beseech you brethren by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all spake the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you : but that ye be perfectly joyned together in the same mind, and in the same judgement.*

**W**HAT! the great Apostle stoop so low as to beseech! and so passionately too, by the Name of our Lord and Saviour Christ.

Be the People never so impatient, boyl and tofs and roar like a raging Sea, sure here's Charm enough to strike the World immediately into a Calm. Beseech! 'tis tantamount to a Command: he beseeches by a Name that cannot but prevail, a Name whom Storm and Tempest it self must Obey. But beseech or command, 'tis all one : the World is deaf to all such Charms, to all such Commands. *Be joyn'd together in the same mind and in the same*

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judgement! and *Κατασκευάσεις* too, united in a beautiful Order and Symmetry of parts? alas when will this be? *Epicurus* his Atoms will as soon by cross interfering motions, weave themselves into a beautiful System of a World, as mens thoughts, variously cross and running counter, unite in one Discipline, one Doctrine, one Church. We shall never see Peace, so long as there are rough uneven tempers in the World, as unfit for Societies, as some rough unhew'n Stones, or knotty crooked pieces of Timber, unfit for Building. There are certain tempers naturally four enough to break through Mountains and Rocks like *Hanibal's* vinegar, and to dissolve the firmest Foundations of Government and Order. And there is especially a *Pharisaical Leaven* four enough, to put whole Societies and Kingdoms into a perfect fermentation. We shall never be all alike, till the different humors of our several constitutions be quite spent, and we are mouldred away in our Graves to rotten Bones and Skulls; then and not till then exactly all alike with half noses, hollow-ey'd, and grinning, as *Lucian* describes Skulls of Wise-men, Mad-men, Fools, Cynicks, Politicians, Hero's, Beggars, blended together in



in *Charnel Houses*. But especially in Religion, men never yet wanted pretences to disagree: *Cain* and *Abel*, though Brothers, agree not in the same kinds of Sacrifices. Contention once intruded into Heaven amongst the Gods, that's Romance; but 'tis too true, she hath more than once intruded into the Church, a bold and troublesome Guest. What? and will Religion then, Religion, which is or should be the very Bond and Cement of Societies, will that also crumble us to pieces? Nay then there's little hope of Unity in this World. Our *Corinthians* divide upon pretences specious enough, even of honouring some *Apollos*, others *Paul*, others *Cephas*. The least pretence of dividing will serve the turn, when men are resolved to be quarrelsome: especially in Cities of great Trade, such as *Corinth* was, the Metropolis of *Achaia*, Rich, Populous, and Proud: where, as they Traffick'd with Forreigners, Goods for Goods; So they seem to have barter'd Religion for Religion too, the Seller basely prostituting his judgement to the Buyers, either Heresie or Schism, to set off Goods the better, and to advance Trade.

Our Apostle *St. Paul*, though by degrees he deals very plainly with these *Corinthians*, yet at the beginning of his persuasive to Unity, he deals with them with all the tenderness imaginable.

But what shall we do now? our modern Shismatics are grown so stiff and stubborn, that 'tis to little purpose to Entreat them. Beg or Command, Weep or Thunder, 'tis all one; they are inexorable, they are inflexible. If the Mercy of God in settling Religion here upon so good grounds, by so legal and warrantable methods, according to the model of the Primitive Church; if the Blood of our Late Dread Sovereign, the Church of *Englands* Martyr; if this King's incomparable Clemency can prevail nothing; all the Passion of our Sacred Oratour *St. Paul*, is utterly cast away.

They have been gently dealt with these many years, and they are but the more hardned in the Schism. The warm Sunbeams will sometimes but harden that Clay, which heavier Storms may soften and make pliable to the Government.

But

But I must remember the Apostles condescension, I must remember his pitty, and his good nature, and with all the moderation I can, endeavour to remove some of the prejudices they have taken up against this Church. And I must be so far free with them as to charge them with the following Mistakes, three especially, the ground of all the rest ; A false Notion of *Christian Liberty* : A false Notion of *Tender Conscience* : A false Notion of the Nature and Measures of a *Due Reformation*.

*First*, A false Notion of *Christian Liberty*. The Church, we apprehend, hath a Liberty infeoffed in Her to determine this way or that in matters of Decency and Order. If this be the Churches Prerogative, conveyed to her by Scripture, particularly that of the Apostle, *Let all things be done Decently and in Order* ; it is certainly my Christian Liberty to Obey, warranted and secured to me virtually by the same Scripture. When I am satisfied in Conscience that the Church maintains the Faith, sound in all the Doctrines she professes ( which to say truth are the proper Objects about which Conscience acts ) 'tis my Priviledge to

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be govern'd by her in other matters of less moment, which do not directly and immediately concern Conscience farther then as a general Rule of Charity obliges me to obey. For as the Apostles leaving out particulars, there is a general Warrant for the Church to Prescribe; so is it a Warrant to me, who am a member of an Orthodox, Visible Church-branch of Christs Holy Catholick Church, to submit to that which makes it a Visible Church, I mean Government and Order. So that the Schismatick is so far wide in his Notion of Liberty, that if I refuse to obey, I in a manner sell away my Christian birth-right, and basely betray my own Liberty. For tho' we have often heard much talk to little purpose of *Christian Liberty*, yet as the Apostle uses the word *Liberty*, we are able to understand no more than this, that Christians under the Gospel are redeemed from the bondage of the Law. So that I am at perfect Liberty to be Govern'd by a Christian Church, the Obligation to the *Mosaick Law* being cancell'd. Else there would be a Visible Church-Government in general Terms, settled upon the Apostles Successors, without Obedience to that Government, which is an absurd Chimera.

Now

Now then if the Schismatick tell us, his Conscience will not suffer him to submit; where then is his *Liberty of Conscience*? who put those Fetters upon his Conscience, but himself; what *Cyclops* made those Fetters? where were they forged? in what *Vulcans* Shop? in what *Ætna*; but in his own zealous over-heated brain? Does the Scripture fetter his Conscience? shew where? if it be truly Conscience he pretends, he is bound to shew, either that to obey or not to obey, is made by some positive Rule of Scripture indifferent, as Marrying, or not Marrying is; or that the thing he boggles at, is either morally ill, or ill because forbidden by a Law. Shew the Law, or I shall without breach of Charity tell him, 'Tis Humour not Conscience. If he would have things of Decency and Order, left as indifferent as Marrying, or not Marrying; he roves ex-travegantly wide from the Case. For in the one case the thing is by a Law indifferent, and so is what it is necessarily, indispensably, and unalterably indifferent; in the other, 'tis left to the Churches Prudence to determine: there the indifferency being the immediate effect of that Law; here,

the Churches determination, the immediate effect of this Law. And therefore the Apostles General Rule is a warrant to Conscience, to secure it from all superstitious fear of being defiled when the Church is obeyed, in things not repugnant to any particular express Rule of Scripture.

*Secondly, A false Notion of Tender Conscience.* If the Conscience be tender, 'tis because there appears at least some ill. But unless some Law or other convince me that a thing is sinful, in truth I count I am in some danger of incurring a Sin, if I make that Evil which is not Evil. For who gave me Authority to call that Evil which God Almighty hath not by some Law or other declared to be so? 'tis a piece of Pride and Presumption in me to call that Evil which is not, and I extort from God a part of his Sovereignty in doing so. There is as black a *Woe* denounced by the Prophet against him that calls Good, Evil, as against him that calls Evil, Good. And therefore, whatever the Schismatick apprehends of *Tender Conscience* startling at the appearance of Evil, *Conscience* is as much in danger of being defiled by calling that Evil which is not Evil, as by calling that  
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not Evil which is really Evil. *Liberty of Conscience, and tenderneſſ of Conſcience, and I fear God, and I am afraid of Sin, and I confeſſ my weakneſſ, my Conſcience will not allow it!* Theſe are the words, ſweet as honey, whereby the Ringleaders of our Schiſmaticks do inſinuate their Poyſon: by ſo ſweet a breath do they convey a holy contagion through a whole Conventicle preſently, as they ſay peſtilential diſtempers are ſpread the farther by ſweet perfumes. *Tender Conſcience!* Who can withſtand the Charm? And, *Acknowledge my weakneſſ!* Who can reſiſt the power of the invincible Argument? The *Tender Conſcience* 'tis confeſſed, naturally moves pity: but then it muſt be the *Tender Conſcience* of ſuch, who make it a Caſe of Conſcience to hearken to Reaſon: who will withal be tender, leaſt they have a Conſcience too tender in punctilio's that really concern not Conſcience immediately. For otherwiſe, there is a *Tenderneſſ of Conſcience* which is cauſed by a certain ſour, fretting, grating humor, that corrodes, that ſours like the *Leven of the Pharifee*, I mean perfect *Ill Nature*; which mixed with a few unlucky grains of intemperate Zeal, frets



frets and galls the very heart of the man, and so he easily mistakes in truth his Sore for the tenderness of his Conscience. May not their weakness deserve some Pitty too? Yes: Charity may cover my Brother's failings: but that weakness will not be covered, which resolves to break out into Rebellion the next opportunity. Truth now, and never till now, do I passionately and heartily deprecate. None can more wish to be undeceived, than we to be deceived in what we say of those, whose hands were they as strong as their heads weak, would quickly satisfy the world what Principles they are of: then you should see that same weak Conscience all in Armour, strong enough to manage a Sword against their King, in an Army of Rebels. Some of their late Scribling Champions flourishing a little in Print, to give their own Party satisfaction, not us; after some fine harangues of inconveniency, burdens and remitting; being by us pressed to come to the main point to tell us downright, what in our Church is in it self unlawful, and then prove it; not a word: they are not bound to give Reasons, they are above the low dispensation.



Is this weakness? 'Tis Pride and inflexible stubbornness: To them, *Scotus* and *Aquinas* are Sots, Cardinals veil your Caps: a Conventicle can furnish you with Doctors more Seraphick, more Irrefragable. The Phana-tick that they say went to Convert the Pope, doubtless outfaced the Old Chair at *Rome*, with much more Infallibility than ever pretended to sit there. For most of those that dissent from us, are Infallibly sure they are in the right: and by the way, it may be noted, that ever since the Church of *England* renounced the Popes Infallibility, they have left us, and resolve to keep us company no longer. These are the men whose uncontrollable Conscience is above all Law: or but for one Law; and that is, that it should be passed into a Law, that their Conscience shall be bound up by no Law. shall *Mahomet* go to the Mountain, or the Mountain come to *Mahomet*? shall these Mens Conscience come to the Law, or the Law to these Mens Conscience? a Garment may be as soon fitted to the Moon, as such a system of Laws fram'd as shall fit every Man's Conscience. It Pinches here, widen the Law: now it Pinches as much.

much there, widen that too: till at last the Law grows so much too wide, as that the man's Conscience having got room enough to turn it self with freedome, wholly shakes off all Law, and that which at first pretended only to Liberty, shall very fairly end in Licentiousness.

Thirdly, A false Notion of the Nature and Measure of a *Due Reformation*. There is such a thing certainly as an obligation lying upon all Churches, in all Ages since the first Preaching of the Gospel, to maintain a Unity in some measure with the Primitive Church, and to regulate all our Reformations by the General Rules and Laws of the most Ancient Church, if we are in earnest when we profess *We Believe one Catholick and Apostolick Church*. Now if the new models of the pretended Reformation of our Reformation should take place, they would so pare away from the Church of England, every thing almost that ever the Primitive Church used, that being reduced to a thing so utterly unlike what the Christian Church was at first, we should seem totally to have broken the Unity. The not weighing this, hath made us run so headlong from the Church

Church of *Rome*, that we scarce own that to be a Reformation, which rejects not almost every thing that ever was in use in that Church, right or wrong. We retain no not one thing but what was before that Churches Apostacy, either exactly the same, or very near it in the most Ancient Church: and to reform otherwise then this, (I crave leave to say) is to break Charity with the good Primitive Church. These men may possibly mean well, but they seem only to consider how to go far enough from *Rome*, never consider to what we are in Charity bound to reduce our selves, I mean to that State whence by degrees *Rome* fell away. In truth our Controversies with the *Romanists* move most upon this hinge, that we reject their Novelties, which against them is one of our best Pleas. So that should we frame against them Arguments from such Topicks as our Schismatics, some of them, would suggest, we must tamely give up the Cause. For if we maintain not our ground, if we keep not to the first Ages, and the four first General Councils, if we secure not as far as may be, our Conformity with the most Ancient Church; we give them the greatest Ad-

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vantage imaginable. At our Reformation, had we ( I condemn not other Churches ) had we I say, renounced Episcopacy, the Ancient model of Church-Government, that bears date long before Infallibility, Supremacy, Transubstantiation, &c. were thought of; what would the *Romanists* have said? how could we have avoided the just imputation of a most Uncharitable Separation from the Ancient Church? But now our Reformation may be an Object of the *Romanists* Envy, because we did thereby as it were reconcile our selves to the most Ancient Church: and our return is in truth to upbrayd them with Schism, and the most honourable way to justifie our departure from them, in points wherein we and they had so long departed from the Ancient Church: which we should never be able to effect, were not our Church constituted as now it is. For let the model be any other, not known to the Ancient Christians, men of such Principles may rayl at Popery, but the Arguments they must be forced to use, will be such, as will be scorn'd, and make the *Roman Catholicks* but the more obstinate.

And

And therefore, if under pretence of flying farther from *Rome*, we Ruin this Church of *England*; we shall have neither Arguments enough left us to defend our selves against *Romes* Novelties, nor Loyalty enough left us I am sure, to secure any Prince in his Throne, Defender of the Faith.

But what do we talk of a Primitive Church? away with this dull Old Way; tell us Schismatics something Brisk and New: these Sons of the Church of *England* can tell us nothing new; they say no more than Old *Ignatius* and *Polycarp*, *Irenaeus*, *Clement* of *Alexandria*, *Tertullian* and *Cyprian*: they can Fight with nothing but old rusty Weapons of Antiquity: we have Swords new furnished at *Geneva*, and *Francford*: nay, we have Antiquity too on our side, we have *Donatists* and *Novatians*, and there we gain a point. Yet Old Schismatics were dull heavy phlegmatick Sorts, so ours: They never durst attempt a Schism, but they would set up a Bishop of their own making, and remain in the state of their Separation, right Episcopal however, as to the Government of the Church: never hoping to gain any Profelytes, should they not pretend

at least to Episcopacy. But ours run down Episcopacy, and then cry they have discovered new wonders to the world, and found out better methods of Church-Government, than their idle Predecessors, *Donatists* and *Novatians*, could ever dream of.

Indeed *Epiphanius* mentions a dear Friend of our Schismatics, one *Aerius* of precious memory, who turn'd Leveller because he could not get a Bishoprick.

But I must tell them for his Credit, he had but few Profelytes, and they hooted at as the Owl, by the more ingenious of his winged Brethren, when he appears with his Gravity among the Airy Wirts.

I am sorry for the sake of some of our Schismatics, who would fain be nibbling at this Story, that *Aerius* was not a Leveller out of pure Conscience; because then the *Presbyterian* Parity might claim some kindred with Antiquity.

Thus

Thus I have briefly discoursed of *Liberty*, *Tender Conscience*, *Reformation*, the three fairest pretences of Schism. Now if this one single Text prevail nothing, if neither our great Apostles Frowns nor Charms, nor his Excommunications, nor his Embraces, nor his Apostolical Authority, nor the Passion of his Oratorie prevail with the Schismatick, but he will tear the Church to pieces, ungratefully rend the very Bowels of that Church that gave him Life, whose Breasts he suck'd; What Expedients for Unity further to propose, I cannot imagine.

'Tis the Temper's Policy too, to Divide that he may Rule, to break the Churches Ranks and Files; that he may Enter and Conquer with Ease. Our Quarrels are his Conquests, the Ruins of our Churches are his Trophies, 'tis only our Peace that he dreads, *Pax vestra bellum est illi*, said *Tertullian*. In all the Apostles Writings there are not more Cautions against any one thing than against Schism. For though Schism in it self consider'd does not directly destroy any one Article of the Faith, yet by destroying the Churches Unity, it will in time destroy the Faith: Because 'tis a false  
Phantastick.



Phantastick Light hovering in the Air, that will lead thousands after it into Errors, over Bogs and Precipices: and will have in time so fatal an influence upon the whole Body of the Catholick Church, as not only to weaken that, by drawing off great numbers from it; but also put the Schismaticks themselves out of a Capacity of being at least Confirmed in the Truths they have received; and so they will lie open to all the Temptations imaginable, of being debauched in the very Principles of their Christian Faith.

For this seems one design at least, of the first Plantations of Churches under such a model of Episcopacy, as might unite Christians in larger Bodies, and prevent the breaking of their numbers into little Junto's and Conventicles; that so they might like great Armies United in Government and Order, both secure their own Faith by their greater Union, and also make more effectual Conquests upon the Unconverted Parts of the World, to whom it must needs be one great motive to come in, when they should see Christians so strongly knit together, in so large Societies,



Societies, with so much Charity, Order and Harmony.

Why then do our Schismatics by going off from our Church, from the common safe Path, ( to say no more ) expose themselves to so great dangers ? did they not forsake us, we might hope one day by calm reasoning to reform their judgement.

Why do they thus fight with us disengenuously and basely, like *Parthians*, who turning their backs, scatter'd their Arrows from behind them ? Why do they thus scatter their envenom'd Arrows, even bitter Words, and never turn their faces, either to survey our Strength, or stay to hear what we can say for our selves ?

Why do they amuse us with Accusations of Popery, like *Atalantas* Ball, with Accusations back upon us, that they might get the start in the Race, and get to Rome first ?

Is it Superstition they dread ? but have not they themselves some Tincture of that too, at least while they ( I may venture to say ) superstitiously avoid it ? have we not known the time, when they honour'd their Factious Preachers even to Superstition ? when they

they honour'd the double lin'd Cap, equal to the Triple Crown; when they payed honours to the handkerchief about his Neck, as to the Holy Rag of some Legend Saint; and took the short Cloak hanging on one side of the Pulpit, while the warm Orator was Transported with Zeal, and Enthusiastick Fire, for the Mantle of *Elijah* just dropping down from the Fiery Chariot?

Do they depart from us that they may Worship God more in Spirit and in Truth? But with all their most glorious Zeal, they will never be able to expiate for their Pride and their Uncharitableness.

The strictest Life of a Schismatick could never in the judgement of sober men, especially *St. Austin*, make Apology for the Scandal of being a Schismatick, did he lead the Life of an Angel.

Do they depart from us, because they cannot joyn in our Publick Prayers, with Devotion enough?

Shall I be first guilty of Sin, a remissness at my Prayers; and then make my *Sin an Apology for my Schism*?

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Do they disobey because the thing is indifferent? or because commanded? if the latter; you see where the Shoe pinches, 'tis not the Ceremony their Conscience boggles at, but the imposition of that Ceremony, for ( by the way ) they abhor Obedience as bad as Idolatry: then must the methods of Government be revers'd, and the quite contrary must be commanded, to make these *Antipodes* profelytes: If the former, the more unpardonable still their disobedience, one of the greatest trials of our obedience to Government being the indifferency of the thing commanded: for if we may not obey a Governour in things otherwise indifferent, and if a Governour may not command what is not forbidden by Gods Law; there will be nothing left for Gods Vicegerent on Earth to command, and there will be no such thing in the world as Obedience to a Prince.

Let such men have a care that they place not too much Religion in meer Notions. For 'tis possible men of such Factionous Principles may talk and think too of Practical Religion it self in a meer Notional way. For when men can neither talk nor think of

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their Christian Duties abstractedly from this or that mode of Worship that accompanies them, the duties run out into certain excrescencies bigger than themselves, and such as will in time destroy the life thereof, while these men would level the Clergy, change the Churches Ornaments into rudeness and nastiness, and would seem great Patrons of humility, but how, by bringing us down to the dust; let them ask themselves this question, Whether it be not some fond conceit of their extraordinary either knowledge or holiness, or both, that makes them scorn to stoop to the Government.

If they depart from us because they know better things than we; if they cannot convince us, let them confess their weakness; if they will not convince us, let them own their ill nature.

If they depart from us because they are holier than we; let them evidence to the world that they are better Christians, at least by being more Loyal Subjects than we.

If their Talent be extraordinary above other mens, let them fairly shew us that the first four or five Ages after Christ and his Apostles, were all in an Error : for they must not think their Malice is levell'd at us alone, it wounds the Primitive Church: it pretends to strike at Popery, but the poyson'd Arrows fly over the Papists heads, over all those Ages between, and wound far beyond, at the distance of fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen Ages : the Ashes of the Holy Primitive Martyrs are disturb'd, the Noble *Constantine's* Ghost summon'd to appear before their four Tribunal, the Acts of the four first General Councils rescinded, the Fathers Writings all defaced, cancell'd and burnt, and they, good men, condemn'd to suffer now a second Martyrdom.

If these men have new illuminations, and will make it appear to the world that the most Ancient Christian Churches, long, long before the date of a corrupted one at *Rome*, were all mistaken ; let's e'ne blot out of the Churches Records, four or five hundred years, and let them pass for nothing,

and begin Christianity anew : down with our Universities, set fire to all our Libraries, with Triumphant Bonfires in Solemnity to welcome into the World these New Lights.

Must we be thus Angry with the Primitive Church, because we find too much Loyalty there ? if that be the Crime ; 'tis the Primitive Churches unhappiness, but our honour, that they in us their humble imitators, must at this great distance of so many Ages, suffer as it were in Effigie.

In short, if they are resolved to quarrel, they may be pleased, as becomes all good Christians, to divert their Anger upon what far more deserves it, their own Sins.

If immoderate Zeal must raise in their hearts and heads turbulent exhalations, and make them *Sons of Thunder*, ever fall Tempests heaviest at home : strike here, here's a Mountain, here's a Rock, here's a proud thought, and here's an unrelenting heart : here lodge undervaluing thoughts of the  
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King and the Government, here lurks Spiritual Pride under the colour of Self-denyal, and Mortification, something of the Publican, more of the Pharisee; and (if they have Humility to own but common Human Infirmities) Sins of all sorts, whereby Gods Holy Spirit is grieved, and his Infinite Love abused. Here are Objects indeed, that call aloud for their just indignation: here if they Employ their Zeal at home against their own Sins, they will have but little ~~either inclination or leisure~~ to quarrel with any man, much less with the Constitutions of an Excellent Well-Govern'd Church.

We and they, all of us hope to attain the same End of our Faith, a Heavenly Canaan is all our journeys end, *We are Brethren, why should we fall out by the way?* Why all this Noise? it will not, it cannot be long, ere we all lye quiet in our Graves: thence we hope all to pass to such a State, where there will be nothing but Unity, Uniformity and Harmony: where a full Choir of Saints, in a Beautiful Church Triumphant, and a Noble



Noble Hierarchy of Angels shall sing Alelujah's  
and Worship God in the Beauties of Holiness,  
for Ever and Ever.

*Amen.*

*To thee O Holy, &c. be all &c.*

**T H E E N D.**



